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General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission

197th Meeting
Monday, 11 December 1995, 10.30 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Erdenechuluun . . . . . (Mongolia)

The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Opening of the Session

The Chairman: I declare open the 1995 organizational session and the 197th meeting of the United Nations Disarmament Commission.

As in past years, the Commission is convened today for a brief session to deal with organizational matters related to its 1996 session, including the election of a new Bureau for 1996, the appointment of the chairmen of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission and its draft provisional agenda for the next substantive session, in accordance with its reform programme entitled "Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission" which was adopted in 1990.

Adoption of the agenda (A/CN.10/L.37)

The Chairman: If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the agenda for this organizational session, as contained in document A/CN.10/L.37.

The agenda was adopted.

Election of the Chairman and other officers

The Chairman: In accordance with the established principle of rotation for the chairmanship of the Commission, the candidacy for the chairmanship for 1996 should come from the Group of Western European and Other States. In that connection, I am very pleased to inform members of the Commission that the Group of Western European and Other States has endorsed the candidacy of Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann of Germany for election to the post of Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for the year 1996.

If I hear no comments, I shall take it that it is the wish of the Commission that Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann of Germany be elected Chairman by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I now declare Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann elected Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for the year 1996.

Ambassador Hoffmann is a distinguished diplomat of his country and has been well known in United Nations diplomatic circles for many years, especially for his rich experience in the field of disarmament. He is currently the representative of Germany to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. During past years he has been very active in the sessions of the First Committee of the General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament, as well as in other important disarmament conferences and sessions of the Disarmament Commission. In particular, he has served as Chairman of Working Groups of the Disarmament Commission on the agenda items entitled "Regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security", at the 1993 session, and "International arms transfers, with particular reference to General Assembly resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991", at the 1995

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session. With such broad experience of the United Nations and expertise in the field of disarmament, I believe that the Disarmament Commission will conduct its business successfully at the next substantive session, in 1996, under the leadership of Ambassador Hoffmann.

Mr. Hoffmann (Germany): I would like to thank everybody for conferring on me the honour — probably in this instance the somewhat dubious honour — of electing me Chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Commission for 1996. I especially thank you, Sir, for your friendly words.

As everybody knows, I hold that the United Nations Disarmament Commission is a very important body, and it is therefore very close to my heart. I know that this year, as in some other years, we are having trouble finding our way out of our regular procedural difficulties, but I am glad that with your help, Sir, until the end of the year at least, we will be able to make every effort to resolve these difficulties. As I said when we talked about these matters before the meeting, I am very grateful, Sir, that while I will be in Geneva for most of next year, you will be here and will give me a little helping hand. I am sure that with all taking a share of the burden we can make the United Nations Disarmament Commission a success in 1996.

The Chairman: I wish to assure Ambassador Hoffmann that until the end of this year and certainly at the beginning of next year, when he will not be here, I will try to help him in his work on those issues that are still pending.

I wish now to proceed to the election of other members of the Bureau, namely, eight Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur for the year 1996.

In this connection, I should like to announce that the Group of Asian States has endorsed the candidacy of Pakistan for one of the vice-chairmanships. The group of Eastern European States has endorsed the candidacy of Poland and Ukraine for vice-chairmanships. The Group of Western European and Other States has endorsed the candidacy of Finland for another of the vice-chairmanships.

So far no candidacies have been put forward from the Group of African States or from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. I hope that these two groups will find it possible to put forward their candidacies as early as possible.

Mr. Zaluar (Brazil): As you know, Sir, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States is meeting right now, and that matter is on the agenda. If the matter is concluded before the end of the meeting we will inform you immediately. We are working on it.

The Chairman: That is an encouraging statement. If I hear no other comment, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect the representatives of the above-mentioned countries as Vice-Chairmen of the Commission for 1996 by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I should now like to proceed with the election of the Rapporteur of the Commission for 1996. The candidate for that post should come from the Group of Asian States. In this regard, I am pleased to announce that the Group has nominated Mr. Rajab Sukayri of Jordan for the post of Rapporteur of the Commission for 1996.

If I hear no comment, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect Mr. Rajab Sukayri of Jordan Rapporteur of the Disarmament Commission for 1996 by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I wish to extend my warm congratulations to all the Vice-Chairmen elected and to Mr. Sukayri of Jordan on his election as Rapporteur of the Commission. I am sure that he will make an important contribution to the work of the Commission in 1996.

Review of the draft resolutions adopted by the First Committee at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly

The Chairman: As members of the Commission are aware, the First Committee of the General Assembly has adopted two draft resolutions which have specific requests in connection with the work of the Commission. For the sake of clarity and for the benefit of the members of the Commission, I should like to refer to those draft resolutions, which will be adopted by the General Assembly tomorrow afternoon.

The first draft resolution is contained in document A/C.1/50/L.28/Rev.1, which was adopted by the First Committee under agenda item 72 (a), entitled "Report of

the Disarmament Commission". The relevant paragraphs of the draft resolution, namely, operative paragraphs 2, 3, 8 and 9, read as follows:

> "2. *Notes with regret* that the Disarmament Commission was unable to achieve agreement on guidelines and recommendations under its agenda item entitled 'Process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons' and on recommendations under its agenda item entitled 'Review of the Declaration of the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade', both of which were concluded in 1995;
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> "3. *Notes* the progress made and continuing consideration by the Disarmament Commission of its agenda item entitled 'International arms transfers, with particular reference to General Assembly resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991', which is to be concluded in 1996;
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> "8. *Recommends* that, pursuant to the adopted three-item phased approach, the Disarmament Commission, at its 1995 organizational session, adopt the following items for consideration at its 1996 substantive session:
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> (a) International arms transfers, with particular reference to resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991;
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> (b) [to be added] 4/
>
> (c) [to be added] 4/"
>
> Footnote 4 states:
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> "The new item will be decided by the Disarmament Commission at its 1995 organizational session."
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> "9. *Requests* the Disarmament Commission to meet for a period not exceeding four weeks during 1996 and to submit a substantive report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session".

The second draft resolution is contained in document A/C.1/50/L.37/Rev.1 and was adopted by the First Committee under agenda item 70 (i), entitled "Measures to curb the illicit transfer and use of conventional arms". Operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution reads as follows:

> "2. *Requests* the Disarmament Commission:
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> (a) To expedite its consideration of the agenda item on international arms transfers, with special emphasis on the adverse consequences of the illicit transfer of arms and ammunition;
>
> (b) To study and report on measures to curb the illicit transfer and use of conventional arms, bearing in mind concrete problems in various regions of the world"

I have just outlined the draft resolutions that have direct relevance to the work of the Disarmament Commission.

Draft provisional agenda for the 1996 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission

The Chairman: In preparing the draft provisional agenda for the 1996 substantive session, account has been taken of the relevant draft resolutions adopted by the First Committee, as I indicated a moment ago, and particularly the draft resolution on the Disarmament Commission, contained in document A/C.1/50/L.28/Rev.1. For the convenience of the members of the Commission, the elements of the draft provisional agenda have been included in document A/CN.10/1995/CRP.6, which has been distributed to all members of the Commission.

At this juncture, I wish to point out that in that document, item 4 is a substantive agenda item for next year which is the same as that of the 1995 substantive session and is expected to be concluded at the 1996 substantive session of the Commission.

As representatives may recall, at the substantive session held from 15 to 30 May this year, the Disarmament Commission concluded two substantive items: first, "Process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons" and "Review of the Declaration of the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade". Pursuant to the three-item phased approach, which was adopted in 1993, two priority disarmament issues should be added as new substantive agenda items for the 1996 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. In this regard, there has been general agreement among delegations on this approach, as reflected in operative paragraph 8 of draft resolution A/C.1/50/L.28/Rev.1, regarding the work of the

Disarmament Commission, which was adopted by the First Committee, as I mentioned a short while ago.

However, now the question is which two disarmament subjects will be added to the agenda of the 1996 substantive session. In this regard, as representatives may recall, informal consultations have been held over the past few months. In those consultations, different views have been expressed and various proposals have been made regarding possible subject items to be included in the agenda of the Disarmament Commission at its 1996 substantive session. Unfortunately, so far no consensus has been reached on the issue and intensive consultations are still going on.

Since the list of possible items has not brought us closer to resolving that particular issue, I should like to urge all delegations to give serious thought to the question of what new items could be included in next year's substantive session. I encourage delegations to put forward their own ideas which, it is hoped, will help us move forward.

The lack of consensus on substantive agenda items for the 1996 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission entails a series of difficulties on all organizational matters, particularly on the questions of the establishment of subsidiary bodies for the agenda items, the appointment of chairmen of the subsidiary bodies, the programme of work for the 1996 substantive session and the date and duration of the 1996 substantive session.

Mr. García (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): First, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, I should like to thank the Chairman and members of the Bureau for their efforts to reach agreement on the matters we are considering, namely, the duration of the session, the items to be included in the agenda and so on.

I should also like to thank the Chairman for his effort in providing the members of the Commission with a list of possible subjects to be included in the 1996 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. I can only state that we agree that consultations should continue with a view to reaching a consensus on both the duration of the session and the items to be considered.

We are of the view that for the time being it is important to continue the consideration of these three subjects and that the duration of our deliberations, as has been stated, should not exceed four weeks. We, for our part, would prefer the session to last not less than three weeks and one day.

In our consultations we shall continue to work to find a response to the Chairman's request that we provide alternative proposals for subjects that could be included in the 1996 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

We are open to new proposals from other member States. We are optimistic that an agreement will finally be reached so that we will be able to carry to completion our work next year.

Mr. Hoffmann (Germany): I recognize that it is probably not possible to reach a solution on the subject of the new items for next year during our meeting today. The question is whether we could at least agree to concentrate on items that are pertinent for the United Nations Disarmament Commission. What I mean, in very concrete terms, is that the question is whether we have to burden our deliberations on this with the subject of the preparation of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

You, Mr. Chairman, will remember that when you chaired our last informal consultations, held when the First Committee was meeting, many delegations wanted to see the United Nations Disarmament Commission take over the task of preparing the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, but the draft resolution on that fourth special session turned out to be rather controversial, and neither the final draft resolution that was finally adopted by the First Committee on that subject nor the resolution adopted by the First Committee on the United Nations Disarmament Commission asks the Commission specifically to include such an item in the Disarmament Commission's agenda.

As we will certainly find other subjects that are of interest to all delegations and as, if the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament comes about, its own preparatory committee will certainly have to be established, it would seem to me that the Commission could probably take a decision today not to take into consideration the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. That, I believe, would make consultations on the new items much easier. I am merely asking whether we could do that.

The other question I have concerns the duration of the 1996 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and its time-slot. As all representatives are aware, we will have a rather crowded agenda next year. Specifically, starting on 22 April there is the continuation of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, which will try to elaborate Protocol II, on land-mines. That is a very important issue for us all, so there should really not be any overlap between the United Nations Disarmament Commission and that Review Conference.

Therefore, during our informal consultations I had the feeling that we could probably make do with two weeks and one day of Disarmament Commission consultations next year, covering the first half of April. Even without taking a decision today on whether to take two weeks or three weeks, we could probably take a decision that next year the United Nations Disarmament Commission session should start on 1 April. That would be a positive step for our planning because we all have to do some advance planning regarding commitments for next year. If we could do that, it would, in my view, already be a positive step.

Mr. García (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should just like to refer briefly to the part of Ambassador Hoffmann's statement relating to the subjects on the agenda. I believe that since the consultations are continuing, it is not advisable to exclude any of the subjects that have been included in the list of possibilities.

For the member States of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, it is extremely important to consider the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament one of the matters that should be considered by the Commission. Perhaps later on, as a result of our consultations, we will be able to present a reformulation of the title of the subject, arrived at by consensus. But the subject itself is what we are interested in, and for the time being we would not want any subject to be excluded from consideration for inclusion in the agenda of the Commission.

Mr. Cambridge (United Kingdom): I should like to refer briefly to the statements made by the Ambassador of Germany and the Ambassador of Colombia. First, on the question of timing, we believe that next year's agenda on disarmament issues, particularly at the beginning of the year, is very crowded. A number of very important and very substantive negotiations will be under way, and I am sure that many delegations here are aware — and that they have similar problems — that those who deal with the subject matter of those negotiations are also those who lead our delegations within the United Nations Disarmament Commission. This being the case, my delegation's view is that next year's session should indeed be a two-week session and our preference would be that this take place, if possible, during the period from 22 April to the early part of May.

We also believe for the same reasons that we should perhaps confine ourselves this year to only two agenda items. That would mean completion of the agenda item already before the United Nations Disarmament Commission, on illicit arms transfers, and our preference would be for the Commission to take up the issue of micro-disarmament.

Mr. Horin (Ukraine): The delegation of Ukraine supports the idea of a two-week session in 1996 in view of the possibility of overloading the community with the schedule of disarmament issues. As far as the timing is concerned, we would prefer to have the session in the second half of April 1996.

Mr. Liebowitz (United States of America): I am speaking now because I can be very brief. I can agree with the previous two speakers. With regard to the topic on the agenda, we favour something in the conventional area and are open to suggestions.

Mr. Richier (France) (*interpretation from French*): After having duly noted what the various delegations have said, we largely support the point of view of the United Kingdom. France would prefer a two-week session on the two subjects of arms transfers and micro-disarmament.

Mr. Moradi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I also want to state the principled position of my delegation. We support the inclusion of three items and a session of three weeks and one day for 1996.

Secondly, I would like to recall that this is the second year that the organizational session of the Disarmament Commission has been faced with the problem of duration. In the view of my delegation, this problem is due to the fact that some disarmament meetings are arranged for the second half of April and the first part of May each year without adequate prior consultations with members of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. The Disarmament

Commission is an important deliberative body of the General Assembly in the field of disarmament. It enjoys the membership of all Member States, and crowding the month of April and the first part of May actually de-emphasizes the role of this body and, in the long term, de-emphasizes the role of the General Assembly in disarmament matters. We hope that attention will be given to this problem in the future so as not to crowd the second half of April and the first part of May, as that makes it difficult for this important body to meet in full.

Another point I wish to raise is that there is a close link between the duration of the United Nations Disarmament Commission session in 1996 and the possible list of items to be considered. We think that further consultations should be held on this issue in the coming weeks, as was referred to by the Ambassador of Colombia, speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Chairman: If no other representative wishes to speak, may I say that, even at the start of the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, it seems that we have some problems and conflicting views, and we will probably have to continue our informal consultations in the weeks ahead to see what can be done about those issues.

Let me recall that according to the provisions of the adopted reform programme, all organizational matters should be concluded at the organizational session of the Disarmament Commission. However, in view of several pending issues at this stage — such as members of the Bureau for 1996, the establishment of subsidiary bodies, the appointment of Chairmen of subsidiary bodies and the question of the inclusion of two new substantive items in the agenda for the 1996 substantive session, as well as its dates and duration — it might be advisable for the Commission to suspend this organizational session until a later date, so that sufficient time could be made available for further consultations on those issues.

If there is no objection, I shall take it that it is the wish of the Disarmament Commission to suspend the 1995 organizational session at this stage and resume the session at a later date.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: The next plenary meeting of the Disarmament Commission will be duly announced in the *Journal* of the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.